

FS Direct

Family Liaison Office (M/DGP/FLO)

Direct Communication to Foreign Service Employees and Family Members

FS Direct

October 1999

From the Director

Thoughts as We Approach the Millennium

Could it be that the clock is ticking louder and faster as we count down the days to the Millennium? Predictably, thoughts seem to focus on past accomplishments and what does the future hold in a new century. FLO has a short history, so we don't need to look back too far, but rather concentrate on the future and what we can do. "Quality of life" has become a recent buzzword, but it was the cornerstone on which FLO was founded. We will continue to serve as your advocates and to provide assistance to globally mobile government employees and their families. Big job, but somebody's got to do it!

I write this having just returned from a regional training conference for NIS and Eastern European CLOs, which was immediately preceded by a Washington training conference for new CLOs. Exhausting, yes, but the infusion of enthusiasm generated by a group of CLOs is infectious. The CLOs are FLO's lifeline to the front, to the concerns and the issues of communities abroad. They bring our office back in touch with the realities of Foreign Service life and just how we can help you to cope with a variety of concerns in the field.

Where are we with issues and advocacy today? What is our biggest challenge? At the close of this century, spousal employment and dual career couples pose a great challenge. The results of the recent McKinsey study based on responses and interviews with 600 FSO's underscored the importance of employment opportunities for trailing spouses. We've "come a long way baby" to quote an advertising jingle, and today spouses do not always opt to follow an employee to a location where there are no opportunities for career enhancement. The spouse pool is highly educated and talented and the positions and low salaries that are available to family members at many of our missions are not an acceptable employment alternative to Generation X. We need to face the serious issue of expanding opportunities for spouses who would like to work and use their acquired skills on the economy.

Global career placement is a lofty goal, but if we are serious about retaining quality employees in the Foreign Service, we need to come up with a solution. First of all, we in FLO continue to work on bilateral and defacto work agreements, which open the door for spousal employment opportunities. Remember the old Skills Bank? It died along with the old Wang system, but it has been redesigned and updated as the Resume Connection. Once finished, this updated repository of spousal resumes and skills will

provide a link to the post of assignment. Stay tuned for the upcoming announcement of this important employment asset. The good news is that you will be able to sign up on line. Additionally, the concept is at the embryonic stage, but we are looking into posting the Resume Connection on the web as well as on the Department's Intranet.

Our millennium goal of global career placement has an additional component, one which focuses on setting up a job network outside the mission similar to an international headhunter. This proposal has resource implications, and as always, money is tight, so it might take a while to move

ahead on this. But we continue to look ahead and to strive for improvements which will make the Foreign Service a stable community, retaining employees and providing opportunities where family members can progress and participate in meaningful employment.

I wish you all a joyous holiday season, and a Y2K glitch free entry into the new century!

Faye Barnes
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FMA Footnotes

Q: Where can I find information on FMA policy?

A: The Office of Personnel – Overseas Employment (PER/OE) sent out a series of six guidance cables on the FMA last year. If your Personnel Office doesn't have them, please contact FLO for copies. PER/OE is drafting additional regulations on the FMA, which can be located in 3 FAM 8200. The Family Liaison Office also has an FMA brochure for family members.

Q: Will my FMA status give me hiring preference over other job applicants?

A: No, the FMA will not give you preference. However, if you have a current security clearance because of your FMA appointment, it may be helpful. Qualified eligible family members should be given hiring preference over non-EFMs under 3 FAM 8210.

Q: What benefit will an FMA appointment give me when I go back to Washington to seek employment with the Department of State?

A: The Department of State is very limited in its hiring. FMA benefits include the following three things:

- Executive Order Eligibility (for those who complete 52 weeks of employment);
- a current security clearance; and
- a place on the State personnel roll by being on an FMA appointment in INWS (intermittent non-work status).

Employment Tip

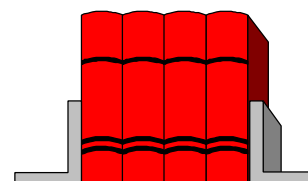
American Council for Voluntary International Action

An excellent resource you might want to add to your employment library is the *InterAction Member Profiles*. This book is published by the American Council for Voluntary International Action and provides detailed information on more than 150 private voluntary organizations. The unique qualities of each organization are listed, along with the factors distinguishing organizations from each other.

Each of these organizations employs large numbers of people in overseas locations, and the book contains a geographic index listing the organizations currently working in each country. These organizations collectively represent more than \$3.3 billion budgets, but more than half of the InterAction members receive little or no support from the federal government.

This book can be an excellent source for people seeking employment on the local economy.

To order the current issue contact InterAction via e-mail: ia@interaction.org or check out their website at <http://www.interaction.org>. The mailing address is 1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 667-8227; fax (202) 667-8236.



Elder Care Initiative Moves Forward

The Department of State recently concluded a policy review that looked at how its regulations, policies, and practices have an impact on employees with care-giving responsibilities for elderly parents. Tasked by Director General Skip Gnehm with examining ways to improve support to the workforce, the Eldercare Working Group returned with recommendations for changes in regulations and in program support. He has agreed with the conclusions, welcomed the formulation of an Eldercare Mission Statement to guide the development of State's eldercare support policy, and agreed to pursue the specific recommendations.

FLO and the Association of American Foreign Service Women were members of the Working Group, along with representatives from regional bureaus and key offices in the Department, including Personnel's Assignment Support Division, Medical Services' Foreign Programs, and the Office of Allowances. Sydnee Tyson, the Department's first Eldercare Coordinator served as chair. (Sydnee was FLO's Education and Youth Officer for the past five years.) Over the summer months the group examined such elder care issues as:

- Eligible Family Member status;
- Separate Maintenance Allowance;
- a visitation travel benefit for employees;
- resources for employees and their families;
- health care overseas; and
- curtailment and extension assignment policy.

The group determined, in the end, that State should not encourage employees to

take elderly relatives on assignment abroad, but it must respect the employee's right to

make the decision based on individual family needs. They also created the Eldercare Mission Statement:

"The Department recognizes that growing numbers of employees will have care-giving responsibilities for parents and other elderly relatives. To enable employees who serve abroad to make better decisions for the well being of their families, the Department will endeavor to provide information on available supports and services that affect the elderly at overseas posts. It will also seek ways consistent with budget constraints to make available certain allowances and other benefits that assist in defraying additional eldercare costs due to service overseas. In Washington, the Department will provide a professionally-led eldercare support group, current and useful information on resources, and referral to community support services in the metropolitan area."

FLO and CLOs will be part of the effort to improve the coordination and communication of Department eldercare support resources. FLO's paper *Caring for Elderly Parents* is a great place to look for orientation and resource information. Ginny Boncy, FLO's Support Services Officer, is available to help answer your questions, as well as Anne Weiss, Director of the Employee Consultation Service. (Anne's mother is nearly 101, so she really knows what she is talking about!) The Overseas Briefing Center is another good place to find State eldercare resources.

Look for more information coming your way as the eldercare initiatives are

developed by the Eldercare Working Group and coordinated by Sydnee.

Surfing Cyberspace for Jobs

A Short Course in Locating Jobs Overseas

First, take these initial steps:

1. Conduct research to determine if an international career is for you;
2. Narrow focus by deciding on a particular country and city;
3. Research the economy in the target area to learn about the business environment;
4. Network with individuals in the area who can suggest leads or make introductions;
5. Join international associations and use the connections as an introduction to others in distant locations; and
6. Use own prior contacts in geographic target area.

Second, follow these tips:

1. To determine sites in your desired destination visit the master list of W3 servers maintained by the world wide web consortium (www.w3.org/pub/DataSources/WWW/Servers.html). This site has an alphabetical listing by continent and then country. Usually organized by major categories, such as business & commercial, education, government and so on. May be in native language.
2. Review home pages of comprehensive virtual libraries. www.yahoo.com or www.excite.com. Search the name of your target country or city to find more resources.
3. Best bets for country specific work abroad, www.cie.uci.edu/10p/work.html
4. Learn about cultural differences at Web of Culture (www.worldculture.com) Or the Country Studies/Area Handbook Program prepared by the Federal Research Division

of the Library of Congress

(<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>)

Then, jump on the web! The following websites might be helpful in your job search.

Action without Borders (www.idealists.org/) is where you can find The Contact Center Network which published a directory of contacts with non-governmental and non-profit organizations. The directory is arranged geographically and topically.

Argus Clearinghouse (www.clearinghouse.net) has on-line resource guides includes a section devoted to regional guides with international resources listed in its business and employment section.

CityNet (www.city.net) can connect you to web sites in more than 5,000 locations worldwide.

CareerMosaic (www.careermosaic.com) and CareerMosaic's International Gateway (www.careermosaic.com/cm/gateway/gateway/.html) lists jobs in Asia, Australia, Canada, Quebec, France, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and the UK.

Use Editor and Publisher Interactive (www.mediainfo.com) to link to hundreds of international newspapers online.

The Electronic Embassy (www.embassy.org) has info on the Washington, DC embassy community and links to countries maintaining diplomatic relationships with the U.S.

The Embassy Page (www.embpage.org) provides contact information for embassies around the world

Escape Artist (www.escapeartist.com) is compiled by a person who believes all Americans should live and work overseas at some point. Full of helpful information on individual countries and cities concerning employment.

Executive Search Firms - EMDS USA – (www.emdsnet.com).

EXPAT Forum (www.expatform.com/Msgboard/webx.cgi?14@@ee6c5cf) has job postings as well as a great deal of information for individuals who are working, living or doing business overseas. Information on the cost of living, using the telephone, time zones and cultural differences are accessible on the Forum. Check the Jobs and Careers section on the Expat Chat! message board. You will need to register to contribute or ask questions.

Global Health Network (<http://info.pitt.edu/HOME/GHnet.html>) is an alliance of experts in health and telecommunications. Includes lists of organizations and available positions from all over the world.

Headhunters International Site, a service of Avotek, (www.avotek.nl/jobs.htm) includes information on the many books they publish on the International job search, but they also provide links (www.expatnetwork.co.uk/jobsearch.html) (www.eurojobs.com) to international job banks, recruiters, and other sources.

International Career Employment Center at (www.internationaljobs.org/) is a comprehensive source of international career positions. Membership is required to receive the employment weekly newspaper, access to critical job openings, profiles of major employers, opportunity to post resume.

International Rescue Committee (www.intrescom.org/employ.html) is the

leading non-sectarian, voluntary organization providing relief, protection, and resettlement services for refugees and victims of oppression or violent conflict. Employment opportunities are listed for all over the world in all job areas.

Jobs & Adverts (www.jobpilot.net/index.phtml) (www.job-hunt.org/general.shtml) covers the international job market with offices in Germany, Poland, Spain, USA, Thailand, Switzerland, Austria, France and Sweden. Services through their web site include job listings (search by keyword or country and discipline and limit it to the most recent or all), a resume database, company listings, and an email service. Resume posting and email service require registration for the Premium Service, but this is free. You can also reach their U.S. site as well as several others dedicated to specific countries and regions through this page.

Les Pages Emploi at (<http://emploi.hmet.fr/>) provides access to a collection of Internet job sites located throughout the world. Search by geographic location, check out the top 100 of the "hottest" job sites, link to Usenet new groups or find helpful mailing lists. Leave a copy of your CV or resume. Main page is in French and English primarily.

Monster.com International at (<http://international.monster.com>) is now bigger. On January 4, 1999, the Monster Board swallowed the OCC whole. Fortunately, the OCC's more staid profile seems to have had some influence on the merger. Job postings for the international market posted on this service. Regions include Africa, Asia, Australasia, Canada, Central America, Europe, Mexico, Middle East, and South America.

Overseas Jobs Express (www.overseasjobs.com) is a good resource

for numerous listings ranging from summer positions to senior-level assignments.

The Public Service Commission of Canada web site (www.psc-dfp.gc.ca/intpgm/epb6.htm) is arranged alphabetically by organization name, excellent listing and links. Great employment links.

Good Luck!

One Family's Experience with Special Education in Ottawa: Part I



We moved to Ottawa in June 1995 with a special needs child. Our son, Christopher was born with an extra-partial 15th chromosome causing from moderate-to-severe mental retardation and global delays in speech, and in fine and gross motor skills. He also displays some autistic-like tendencies. (Article by Mari O'Connor, wife of an FSO in Ottawa, Canada May 10, 1999.

After 2 years of infant stimulation programs and 1 year of a special education pre-school program in Arlington, Virginia, we felt we were ready to move to a foreign post. Because of the severe nature of our son's disability we decided to try first for an assignment to Canada.

One year before the move we traveled to Canada to research a job for my husband and schools for the children. The decision for a school for our daughters (then aged 6 and 9) was easy. Elmwood, a girl's school, has small classes, an international clientele and uniforms (!). The State Department educational allowance would pay the school fee.

For our son (then age 3) we decided to investigate small pre-schools. We were undecided about whether an integrated or segregated setting would be best for him. We found a small pre-school to Grade 3 school only 1 mile from the Elmwood. The school, Fernhill, was willing to work with us.

Our neurologist at the Children's Hospital of Washington D.C. recommended a

neurologist in Ottawa. We wanted someone knowledgeable in the use of and blood work

required for the two anti-seizure medicines that our son requires. The Ottawa neurologist, Dr. Sharon Whiting, gave me the name of her children's pediatrician. I now had a neurologist and a pediatrician familiar with developmentally delayed children.

After arriving in Canada we made an appointment with Dr. David Doyle, Head of The Children's Treatment Center at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO.) It is his department's job to assess children and determine what services they need. He assessed our son, gave us letters indicating Christopher's need for speech, occupational and physical therapy and told us about the Andrew Fleck Center. Andrew Fleck is the Ottawa area pre-school special education support unit. Because of our diplomatic status we do not qualify for participation in the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP.) This means that we are responsible for paying for therapies and support services.

We knew that our son was eligible for special education funding through the State Department. After presenting a copy of his Arlington County Individual Education Plan (IEP) as well as a doctor's letter stating his disability and need for special education to the State Department Office of Medical Services, funding was authorized.

With the help of the Andrew Fleck Center my son's new school, Fernhill, hired an aide to assist him in the classroom. He was assigned to a class with children approximately one-year younger than he. I opted for 5 mornings per week. Because I was still learning about my son's disability and how best to help him, I decided to have therapists come to the house rather than to school to work with him. Dr. Doyle gave me

the names of two companies who employ therapists. I arranged with these companies (Communicare Therapies and a physical therapy company) to have therapists come to the house weekly. Because of the frequency of the visits we negotiated a price lower than the official Province of Ontario rate.

To enable the aide who worked with my son at school to better understand his needs, I hired her to come monthly to the house for these therapy sessions. Also I hired the therapists to go to the classroom several times during the year to work with the teachers so that they felt more comfortable working with my son.

The Andrew Fleck Center arranged meetings between teachers and therapists. They also helped to employ some of the communication suggestions in my son's classroom. My son needed adapted seating, so Andrew Fleck supplied us with a suitable chair. Andrew Fleck came to his classroom every month or so and made suggestions on problems which had arisen or suggestions about ways to include my son in activities which were too difficult for him. Andrew Fleck also wrote my son's Individual Education Plan. Each year I sent a copy of this document to the Office of Medical Services.

We incurred no cost for Andrew Fleck's services. Because Christopher turned six during our final year at Fernhill I was told that services from Andrew Fleck would stop

after that school year. (It is Andrew Fleck's responsibility to service pre-school children under age 6.) Before my final decision to move Christopher to a public school I had negotiated a deal with the director of



Andrew Fleck. If Christopher remained at Fernhill for a fourth year we would be charged an hourly rate for the services of Andrew Fleck. They would continue to visit the school, write IEPs and facilitate meetings among everyone involved in Christopher's development.

True inclusion meant that my son was encouraged to be as independent as possible. Because he was still not able to walk independently and was still (and still is) in diapers, modifications had to be made for him. Andrew Fleck assisted Fernhill in making these modifications. The two groups worked well together and made it all seem painless.

During our 3 years at Fernhill Christopher stayed with his original classmates. This meant that he not only knew his classmates, but more importantly, that the children knew Christopher and felt comfortable with his differences. When at age 4 Christopher finally learned to walk independently the entire school rejoiced. When Christopher learned a new skill it was often the children who reported it to me first. It made for a wonderful setting for our young son.

Over the three-year period that my son attended Fernhill he had numerous aides. Two left because of their husband's transfers. One was fired. The school leaders listened to my desires and wishes for my son. The bills for the school and the aide were sent directly to the Embassy. We first paid the therapy bills and then we made a claim to the Embassy. I opted to drive my son to school but could have used some of the special education allowance transportation.

END OF PART I

Evacuation: The Effect on Kids



The numbers are compelling: 136 posts evacuated since 1990. In 1998, 27 authorized or ordered evacuations took place with over 1,100 evacuees. Over the past few years, the number of evacuations has risen until the average is now one every four to five weeks. The length of time that evacuees stay away from post has grown as well and evacuees remain on evacuation status an average of three to four months. With disrupted lives comes uncertainty, anxiety, and the desire to get back to a normal life. Often forgotten are the children of evacuees. What is the toll on their lives?

Adults in an evacuation deal with feelings of loss and lack of control, whereas children may have these feelings to a greater extent and be less able to articulate them. Along with these feelings of loss might be real concerns about the safety of those left behind. In addition, kids are often put into a new school forcing yet another adaptation to a new environment and culture. Parents may have to adjust to the difficult changes evacuation brings, but adaptation to a new school is not one of them.

Reflections on Evacuation from Parents

"We thought we would be here for only 30 days. My 15 year-old packed 10 pairs of shoes and no clothes."

"One month without toys is okay. Five months without toys is not okay. I tried to recreate a life for my kids."

"My youngest child forgot her dad. My kids had more nightmares, more insecurities, and more anger, sometimes

screaming 'I don't love Daddy' in the midst of a tantrum."

These parents' comments were captured on the video "Evacuees: Lives on Hold" produced by the Overseas Briefing Center in interviews with some of the 250 people evacuated from Pakistan. Parents reported that younger children don't have much understanding of the situation. Commonly heard questions were:

"Why can't we go back?"

"Why can't Daddy come here?"

"Why won't the State Department let us go back?"

With teenagers it is different, they do understand, and often feel caught in the middle – between parents, and between a life they once had and the one they now have as an evacuee.

Out Of the Mouths of Babes: Youthful Evacuees Speak Out

"It was hard – my dad only visited once. We were separated for the first time. Sometimes my mom and I were mad at each other due to stress."

"My mom didn't have a job anymore. My dad was being shifted from desk to desk with no real projects to do, no real work, no phone. I didn't talk about my problems because I was worried about my family. There were a lot of things I didn't talk about because I didn't want to worry them."

"A reporter came over to me and asked, 'So how do you feel to be home?' And I thought, I'm not home."

"It's hard to get involved at school because we thought we were only going to

be here 30 days. I thought I couldn't get involved in the school play. By giving yourself to something after school, it seems like you are permanently here. I guess it's psychological. I would just go home and sleep."

Some words of advice from Pakistan's evacuated teens: *"If you put your mind to it you can handle it. Get involved. For example, I didn't want to go on an AWAL outing (Around the World in a Lifetime – a teen club sponsored by the Foreign Service Youth Foundation). Finally I did and it was great. These were kids just like us. They wanted to go "home" too (overseas) and they weren't even evacuated."*

Tips for Parents – How to Communicate with Your Evacuated Child

- Whatever your children say or do, assume, until proven otherwise, that this evacuation is as distressing to them as it is to you. Children show and express feelings differently from adults.
- If your child is talking about the evacuation, you are lucky, no matter what he or she is saying. Try not to discourage the expression of even very extreme feelings that may make you feel uncomfortable.
- Talking out is better than acting out, but your child may need help with where and

when to express especially strong feelings.

- Don't make impossible promises and don't say anything untrue. For example, if your child is worried about people or belongings left behind it's okay to say, "We don't know and we are worried, too, but we're going to keep trying to find out."
- Don't deny that you are afraid or angry. Kids will sense your true feelings so don't try to hide them.
- When you are asked difficult questions about people's "bad behavior" take the age of your child into consideration. With younger elementary-age children, ask them what they think, get them to express their opinions. Teenagers will engage in a serious discussion about the issues.

Many lessons about evacuations can be learned from evacuees. Important lessons to learn from evacuated children are that they need to be heard, and they appreciate communication and honesty. As for the Pakistan evacuees, after five months they returned to post. The Belgrade evacuees have come back to the U.S. or gone on to other posts and will not return to Belgrade. And the kids? Their lives, once disrupted, are slowly getting back to normal. Young people as evacuees have proved to be as resilient as their Foreign Service parents.



AAFSW Secretary of State Pin for Volunteerism

Coming soon to a post near you, the annual cable announcing the AAFSW Secretary of State's Pin for outstanding volunteerism. Let's recognize all those people who go out of their way to help our own community, or the host community. The cable will have specific guidelines, on criteria for nomination. There is one nomination per post and an award for each geographic region. The nominations are due in Washington by the end of February and the

awards are given on Foreign Service Day in May. Look around your community, talk to your CLO, and nominate someone in your community who deserves recognition!

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FS Direct is published twice a year by the Family Liaison Office.

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